PROTECTION OF SUGAR BEET FIELD WORKERS
UNDER THE
FEDERAL SUGAR CONTROL ACTS OF 1934 AND 1937

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Contents

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1. Legislative background

On May 9, 1934, the President signed the Jones-Costigan Act which added sugar to the list of "basic agricultural commodities" covered by the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. The sugar amendment gave the Secretary of Agriculture the power to determine the total flow of sugar into the United States market and thus affect its price.[1] It was to call a halt to the tariff-stimulated production of raw sugar in this country, and to the precipitous drop in the price of sugar. It provided a means of limiting sugar marketings under a quota system and of adjusting production of sugar beets and sugar cane in the producing areas. The Act also included a section for the protection of the workers in the sugar beet fields.

At the time of the passage of the Jones-Costigan sugar amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration had been in operation for nearly a year. The Secretary of Agriculture, in cooperation with farmers, had successfully inaugurated a program for the curtailment of production of wheat, cotton, corn and tobacco. Benefit payments from processing taxes had been made to producers of these

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1/ The policy contained, in part, in Section 2 (1) of the Agricultural Adjustment Act provided: "To establish and maintain such balance between the production and consumption of agricultural commodities, and and such marketing conditions therefor as will reestablish prices to farmers at a level that will give agricultural commodities a purchasing power with respect to articles that farmers buy equivalent to the purchasing power of agricultural commodities in a base period," 1909-1914.

commodities, and the technique and machinery of voluntary contracts with farmers for control of production had been developed. Thus, in 1934 the theory of agricultural adjustment had materialized into specific plans and the legislative and administrative groundwork had been laid for the inauguration of a national sugar control program along lines similar to those adopted for other agricultural commodities. 1/

The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 contained no provisions relating directly to the establishment of labor standards for agricultural workers, nor was the inclusion of such standards contemplated during the period prior to its enactment. The inclusion of labor provisions in the Jones-Costigan Act was, therefore, an innovation in agricultural legislation.

The need for the adoption of labor standards for beet workers grew out of the disclosure of the distress of this group of agricultural workers at the hearings on the subject of a Code for the Beet Sugar Industry under the NRA in August 1933. At the suggestion of the NRA Administrator, the President authorized the appointment of a committee composed of representatives from the Departments of Labor and Agriculture and from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration "to take immediate steps to formulate, with representatives of the beet sugar industry, the beet growers, labor and the public, a plan for reorganization of labor policies in the sugar

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1/ The principles of the AAA, however, could not be applied precisely to sugar as to other commodities, because sugar is an import, not an export, commodity. There is a continental deficit, not surplus of this commodity.

beet fields."[1] The Committee, after reviewing the labor conditions of the beet workers and the economic conditions of the sugar beet growing industry, made the following recommendations:

1. That sugar be added to the list of basic commodities included in the Agricultural Adjustment Act.

2. That the Secretary of Agriculture be empowered to prescribe labor conditions as prerequisite to the payment of benefits.

3. That these labor conditions establish minimum age for children and minimum wage for beet workers employed in the beet fields.[2]

These recommendations formed the basis of the Jones-Costigan Act.

In January 1936, the United States Supreme Court invalidated the processing tax and production-adjustment provision of the Agricultural Adjustment Act, of which the Jones-Costigan Act was an integral part. The decision of the Court did not effect the marketing quota system. This permitted Congress to approve a public resolution in June 1936 extending the quota provisions of the Jones-Costigan Act through December 31, 1937. This action assured a protected market for the sellers of sugar. But invalidation did result in the loss of the benefit payments to growers[3]

1/ W. T. Ham, "Regulations of Labour Conditions in Sugar Cultivation under the Agricultural Adjustment Act," International Labour Review. January 1936, p. 75.

2/ W. Lewis Abbott, Report for the Committee on Labor Conditions in the Growing of Sugar Beets. March 1934, p. 1.

3/ After the invalidation the sugar beet and sugar cane producers were eligible to participate in the agricultural conservation program developed under the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936. Under this program, benefit payments were made to farmers for maintaining national acreages along with soil conservation measures. Desirable as those features were, they proved inadequate to meet the economic and social problems facing the sugar industry.

and in the legal suspension of the labor standards provided for in the Production-Adjustment Contract under the Jones-Costigan Act. The result was, in the words of the Secretary of Agriculture, "an inequitable distribution of income under the quota system." 1/ The need, therefore, for continuing government control of sugar beet and sugar cane production as well as the marketing of sugar still remained, and new legislation was proposed. Moreover the necessity for legal protection of agricultural workers in the sugar beet and sugar cane fields persisted, and President Roosevelt in his message to Congress on proposed sugar legislation on March 1, 1937, stated:

> It is highly desirable to continue the policy which was inherent in the Jones-Costigan Act, effectuating the principal that an industry which desires the protection afforded by a quota system or a tariff should be expected to guarantee that it will be a good employer. I recommend, therefore, that the prevention of child labor and the payment of wages of not less than minimum standards be included among the conditions for receiving a Federal payment.

On September 1, 1937, the Sugar Act of 1937 received the approval of the President. It contained substantially the same labor provisions as had its forerunner, the Jones-Costigan Act. These provisions enabled the Federal Government for the first time in our history to make efforts to stamp out child labor in one important child-labor-employing industry,

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1/ After the U.S.Supreme Court decision in the Hoosac Case, "the quota provisions of the Jones-Costigan Act and Public Resolution No. 109, maintained the price to consumers, and net proceeds from the sale of beet sugar rose by approximately the amount of the suspended processing tax. Under the usual grower contracts, this meant an increase in the price paid to producers of only half the amount of the tax. Growers received this increase, but lost the materially larger benefit payments. Thus, the net effect was to give the producers less and the processors more total income." Report of the Secretary of Agriculture, 1938, pp. 101-102.

to make possible the setting of minimum wages and to establish a system for adjudicating labor disputes in one sector of the agricultural industry.

11. Economic basis for the adoption of labor standards under the Jones-Costigan Act of 1934.

Even before the depression which began in 1929, investigations of various Government and private agencies uniformly revealed extremely poor conditions of employment and sub-standard living levels among agricultural laborers who performed the work on the sugar beet fields of the United States. It was found that rates of pay and annual earnings were low, hours of work long, employment intermittent and the work intensive, employment of children widespread, amount of supplementary and off-season work small, and living conditions characterized by overcrowding, lack of sanitation and inadequate diet. The industrial depression of 1929 aggravated these conditions.

A. Wage Rates.

Data on wage rates paid to agricultural workers in the beet fields prior to 1933 are scattered and incomplete. Some indication of their decline since 1920 may be obtained from those available in the State of Colorado, the major beet producing State of the country. The wage rates in this State in 1920 equaled between $30 and $35 per acre. From this all-time peak, wages declined to an average of about $22 during the three-year period 1921-1923. After 1923, rates increased slightly - the flat

rate[1] averaged about $23 per acre between 1924 and 1929. Wage levels began to fall again with the 1931 crop season, reaching an average of about $21 per acre in that year. The all-time low average of about $12 was recorded in 1933, but rates as low as even $8 per acre were reported in Colorado in that year.

For the United States as a whole, wage rates per acre fell from an average of about $23 during the 1921-1923 period to an average of slightly less than $14 in 1933. The decline from the 1930 level was particularly sharp in 1931, when wages fell over 40 per cent.[2]

It was these wage conditions which prompted the Secretary of labor to remark in the spring of 1934 that "wages for beet workers have fallen so deplorably that the Government is financing workers even during their term of employment," and suggested that "if now the Government is to give benefit payments to farmers, it seems only reasonable for the Government to make it a condition of such benefit that the farmers will do something to relieve the United States of the burden of caring for the farmer's

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1/ After 1923 the records show a flat rate per acre and a "bonus" paid for each ton above a certain yield per acre, usually 12 tons.

2/ These data are cited by William T. Ham, "Sugar Beet Field Labor Under the AAA," Journal of Farm Economics, May 1937, p. 646, and were obtained from the following studies and reports; U. S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan, Publication No. 115, 1923, pp. 61-62; U.S. Tariff Commission, Costs of Producing Sugar Beets, Washington, D.C., 1928, Part X, pp. 44-45; Report to the President on Sugar, Report No 73, Second Session, 1934, pp. 182-183; W. Lewis Abbott, Report for the Committee on Labor Conditions in the Growing of Sugar Beets, March 1934, pp. 3, 54 (mimeographed).

own employees."[1]

B. Annual earnings.

What rates of payment per acre meant in terms of yearly earnings for sugar beet field workers has been shown in a number of studies.

Earnings of about 300 sugar beet families in Colorado showed that for the season's work in 1920, 30 per cent received less than $800, one-third received between $800 and $1200, one-third earned from $1200 to $2,000, and only about 4 per cent earned over $2,000. The average (median) amount was a little over $1,000.[2] This was the year when the average rate per acre was almost $34, the highest on record.

In 1924, the average income per family from beet work in Colorado was about $780. In the Western Slope of the State, the total income for beet work amounted to an average of $511 per family.[3] In the beet fields of certain districts of the South Platte Valley of the State,[4] each family earned an average of a little over $1,000.[5] Another investigation of beet workers in that State, this time in the Arkansas Valley,

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1/ Letter of the Secretary of Labor to Honorable Edward P. Costigan, U. S. Senate, April 17, 1934; quoted in W. T. Ham, op. cit., p.646.

2/ U. S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan, Publication No. 115, 1923, p. 62.

3/ Charles E. Gibbons and Howard M. Bell, Children Working on Farms in Certain Sections of the Western Slope of Colorado, National Child Labor Committee, 1925, No. 327. p. 68.

4/ Included Logan, Morgan and Weld Counties.

5/ S. A. Brown, R. O. Sargent, and C. B. Armentrout, Children Working in the Sugar Beet Fields of Certain Districts of the South Platte Valley, Colorado, National Child Labor Committee, 1925, No. 333, p. 84.

showed average earnings of about $450. The percentage distribution involving 140 beet contract families was as follows: 50 per cent earned less than $400; more than two-thirds earned less than $500; and one-third, over $500.[1/]

These earnings, small as they generally were, fell even lower in 1933. In that year, Colorado beet workers averaged $12.37 an acre equivalent to an income of about $78 per worker. Assuming an average of four workers to a family, the seasonal earnings equaled about $312 per family.[2/] It is of interest to compare this figure with the $565 estimated by the Bureau of Home Economics of the Department of Agriculture to be the minimum amount which would be necessary to support the contract beet worker and his family, consisting of six persons, at the lowest possible standard. This minimum allowed nothing for rent,[3/] no savings, and $1.80 a year for recreation. It was concluded that "if the minimum which the contract worker family should receive for a year's work in beets is placed at $600, there is no likelihood that it would exceed the barest substantial level."[4/]

1/ B. H. Mautner, W. Lewis Abbott, et al., Child Labor in Agriculture and Farm Life in the Arkansas Valley of Colorado, National Child Labor Committee, publication No. 359, 1929, p.

2/ W. Lewis Abbott, Report for the Committee on Labor Conditions in the Growing of Sugar Beets, March 1934, p. 3.

3/ Rent was omitted because it is the general custom of beet sugar companies or farmers for whom the laborers work to supply them with houses rent-free.

4/ W. Lewis Abbott, op. cit., p. 7.

C. Earnings of beet workers from sources other than beet work.

Beet workers are able to add some earnings from work on other crops or in industrial enterprises such as sugar factories or in coal mines to the income received from beet work. As a rule, however, professional beet workers depend on the family earnings in beets for their main support during the year. Even before 1930 they found other farm work difficult to secure during the summer or any type of work during the winter months.[1]

D. Beet workers on relief.

Low annual earnings from beet work and the small amount of supplementary income from other sources of employment have forced agricultural beet workers to seek public assistance or private relief. Many beet workers have little or no reserve with which to begin the winter at the end of the working season after all debts have been paid to the storekeeper from their earnings received after the harvest. Not all beet laborers' families which are in need are supported by public assistance or private relief during the winter months or during the work season. Some do not apply for relief, while, frequently, others are refused when they do apply. Those that do not apply for relief live without cash resources only by obtaining the most needed commodities on credit extended by local stores or the local sugar company against their next

1/ Cf. Paul S. Taylor, "Mexican Labor in the United States, Valley of South Platte," University of California Publications in Economics, Vol. 6, no. 2, 1929, pp. 121-123.

season's earnings. Such families may frequently have even less to live on than those on relief.[1]

A survey conducted in every county in which beets constituted an important crop showed that in 1933 about 750 beet working families in 15 counties applied for aid.[2] About 450 of these families actually received assistance amounting to almost $5,000, or an average of about $11 a family. The amounts distributed ranged from $2 per family in one county to $30 in another.[3] Another survey of conditions among beet workers, this time at the end of the 1934 working season, revealed that 38 per cent of the families which supplied answers to the question regarding "cash on hand after bills were met," reported having no cash left on hand after paying such bills. About 30 per cent reported having less than $60, and only 26 per cent had $60 or more on hand.[4]

1/ For criticism of these advances which may develop into a system of peonage, see statement of C. E. Gibbons of the National Child Labor Committee, Hearings on Proposed Marketing Agreement, August 11, 1933; cited in W. Lewis Abbott, *op. cit.*, pp. 3 and 5.

2/ This figure is based on incomplete returns and probably was higher when all the replies to the questionaire were tabulated. Moreover, several of the county administrators making the replies stated that the beet workers were just beginning to apply for relief and that the relief burden, therefore, would become heavier before the next beet season began. Cf. W. Lewis Abbott, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

3/ W. Lewis Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

4/ The rest reported some cash on hand, but not the amount. See Elizabeth S. Johnson, "Wages, Employment Conditions, and Welfare of Sugar Beet Laborers," Monthly Labor Review, February 1938, p. 337.

E. Age and daily working hours of child workers.

It has been generally recognized that the work of young children in the beet fields is socially undesirable not only because of the physical tax on them[1/] and because of the depressing effect on wages, but also because of its interference with their school attendance and educational progress.

The employment of child labor in the beet producing areas, next to that in the cotton belt, has been for many years an outstanding example of child exploitation in agriculture. In fact, the considerable extent to which the income of beet families is dependent on the labor of children rarely leads an individual without a family to undertake a contract for beet work.

In 1920, over 75 per cent of the children between six and 16 years of age belonging to beet working families in Colorado worked in beets. Of these 1,073 working, over 70 per cent belonged to families who were beet laborers. The others were children of farm tenants or farm owners. One-third of the beet working children, it was found, had gone to work when they were eight years of age or younger. A large number of these children, therefore, had worked at least five seasons, and some of them longer.[2/]

The great majority of the children of farm laborers were found to be working over eight hours a day. Eighty-five per cent of those who

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1/ The Children's Bureau has declared that the work required of children in beet fields was "probably the most exacting done by children anywhere, because of long hours, strained positions, intense heat, exposure to wet, and the speed required in certain operations." U. S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Child Labor, Facts and Inquiries, Publication N o. 197, 1933, p. 31

2/ See Children's Bureau, *op. cit.*, Publication No. 115, pp. 19 and 35.

performed thinning and blocking operations, and about 70 per cent of those who did hoeing, worked nine to 14 hours a day. Almost 75 per cent of those who pulled and topped beets worked between nine and 13 hours a day.

Similar conditions were found in Michigan. In 1920, of about 1,100 children between six and 16 years of age belonging to beet growing families in that State, 68 per cent worked in beets. Of the approximately 760 working children, almost 50 per cent were members of families of beet laborers. The other half represented children of farm tenants or farm owners. The majority of the working children had begun to work in the beet fields before they were 10 years of age.1/

In Michigan, as in Colorado, the preponderant majority of the children of farm laborers worked over eight hours a day. Eighty-eight per cent of those who performed thinning and blocking operations, and 83 per cent of those who did hoeing, worked nine to 14 hours a day.2/

In the North Platte Valley of Nebraska, in 1923, out of about 1,200 workers under 21 years of age, 80 per cent were under 16, 65 per cent were under 14, and 25 per cent were under 10 years of age. Nearly one-fourth of them had worked from five to 10 seasons. Child workers under 16 years of age spent an average of 62 working days of 11 hours

1/ Children's Bureau, op. cit., Publication No. 115, pp. 28, 30 and 34, 86 and 94.

2/ No information is available on pulling and topping because the study was completed before these operations began. It is probable, however, that the work-day details did not differ greatly from those in Colorado, Ibid., pp. 91 and 93.

each during the season.[1]

In certain sections of the Western Slope of Colorado, children who worked in beets in 1924 averaged slightly over 12 years of age. This was lower than the average age of children at work in any other crop. Almost 25 per cent of the beet working children were from six to nine years of age. The work-day for children employed in the beet fields was 10 hours per day, which was longer than the hours of work of children employed in any other crop.[2] Similar findings relative to age of child workers and hours of employment in beet fields were found in other sections of the State.[3]

In Michigan, Nebraska, and Colorado, in the early 1920's, the combined total number of children under 16 years of age working in the beet fields of these states was almost 40 per cent of the total number

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1/ S. A. Brown and R. O. Sargent, Children Working in the Sugar Beet Fields of the North Platte Valley of Nebraska, Bulletin No. 318, 1924, pp. 16-17 and 24.

2/ C. E. Gibbons, Children Working on Farms in Certain Sections of the Western Slope of Colorado, National Child Labor Committee, Publication No. 327, 1925, pp. 30-31.

3/ See B. F. Coen, et. al., Children Working on Farms in Certain Sections of Northern Colorado, Colorado Agricutural College Bulletin, Series No. 27, No. 2, November 1926; S. A. Brown, et al., Children Working in the Sugar Beet Fields of Certain Districts of the South Platte Valley, Colorado, National Child Labor Committee, Bulletin No. 333, 1925; B. H. Mautner, et al., Child Labor in Agriculture and Farm Life in the Arkansas Valley of Colorado, National Child Labor Committee, Publication No. 359, 1929.

of workers in this occupation.[1] The following figures show the number and proportion of children engaged in the hand processes of sugar beet areas in each of the three States during the years 1922, 1923 and 1924:

Area	Year of study	Number of families	Total number of workers	Number of children under 16	Percentage of children
Michigan[2]	1922	274	2,247	800	36.5
Nebraska[3]	1923	297	1,634	815	49.9
Platte Valley, Colorado [4]	1924	271	1,404	647	46.1
Northern Colorado[5]	1924	296	2,182	673	30.8
Arkansas Valley of Colorado[6]	1924	140	544	254	46.7
Total		1,278	8,011	3,189	39.8

1/ In 1933 the Tariff Commission estimated that for the country as a whole there were 9,541 boys and 5,292 girls, or a total of almost 15,000 child workers under the age of 16 years who were members of contract laborers' families and who worked in the beet fields. Thus, out of an estimated total of 110,354 beet workers in the United States in 1933, over 13 per cent were child beet workers. (See letter from John Lee Coulter to A. J. S. Weaver, December 19, 1933; cited by W. T. Ham in Journal of Farm Economics, May 1937, p. 644.) This estimate would seem to indicate that employment of children in the beet fields had fallen during the years following 1922-1924. However, no definite conclusions can be made since these are imperfect estimates.

2/ W. W. Armentrout, et. al., Labor in the Sugar Beet Fields of Michigan, National Child Labor Committee, 1923.

3/ S. A. Brown and R. O. Sargent, op. cit.

4/ S. A. Brown, et al., op. cit.

5/ B. F. Coen, et al., op. cit.

6/ B. H. Mautner, et al., op. cit.

III. Operation and administration of the Jones-Costigan Act.

The Jones-Costigan Act of 1934 provided for the establishment of sugar quotas and marketing allotments, for a processing tax on sugar, and for benefits to growers making production-adjustment contracts for sugar beets with the Government. In providing for benefit payments to growers under the production-adjustment contracts, the Act specified that these contracts "may contain provisions which will limit or regulate child labor, and will fix minimum wages for workers or growers employed by the producers or processors of sugar beets or sugar cane who are parties to such agreements."1/ The Act also authorized the Secretary of Agriculture "to adjudicate any dispute as to any of the terms under which sugar beets or sugar cane are grown or are to be grown or marketed, and the sugar and by-products thereof are to be marketed," if such assistance was requested by any producer or grower or worker or any of their associations.2/

In accordance with these terms, the following provisions, proposed by the Secretary of Agriculture and discussed at hearings held in Michigan and Colorado in September 1934, were inserted in the approved Sugar Beet Production contract form:3/

1/ An Act to include sugar beets and sugar cane as basic agricultural commodities under the Agricultural Adjustment Act, Public No. 213, 73rd Congress, (H. R. 8861), Section 8 (a) 3.

2/ Ibid.

3/ Form Sugar 3, Part 1, Section 10, approved October 16, 1934.

1. Child labor. The producer hereby agrees not to employ nor to suffer nor permit the employment by any other person, directly or indirectly, in the production, cultivation and/or harvesting of sugar beets on this farm, of any child under the age of 14 years, except a member of his own immediate family, whether for gain to such child or any other person; and he agrees not to so employ or permit such employment of a child between the ages of 14 and 16 years, inclusive, except a member of his immediate family, for a longer period than eight hours a day.

2. Fixing of minimum wages. The Secretary shall have the authority (1) after due notice and opportunity for public hearing at a place accessible to producers and workers involved, and (2) on the basis of a fair and equitable division among processors, producers, and workers of the proceeds derived from the growing and marketing of sugar beets, and the products thereof to establish minimum wages for this factory district to be paid by producers to workers and, where necessary, the time and method of payment in connection with the production, cultivation, and/or harvesting of the 1935 and/or the 1936 crop of beets. The producer agrees to abide by the determination of the Secretary when such minimum wages and the time and method of payment have been established.

3. Prompt and full payment of wages. To insure a fair and equitable division among processors, producers, and workers of the proceeds derived from the growing and marketing of the 1934 crop, the producer hereby agrees to pay promptly, to the workers who work or have worked on this farm, all bona fide claims for wages for said workers, arising in connection with the production, cultivation and/or harvesting of the 1934 crop, and to provide to the Secretary, prior to the time of payment of the final 1934 crop payment under this contract, a certificate to the effect that such claims have been paid. The Secretary shall have the right, in his discretion, to refuse to make the final 1934 crop payment, due under this contract, to the producer, unless the producer shall submit additional evidence satisfactory to the Secretary that all such wages have been paid.

4. Adjudication of labor disputes. The producer hereby agrees that he will abide by the decision of the Secretary with respect to any labor disputes involving the producer, in connection with the production, cultivation, and/or harvesting of sugar beets of the producer, when any such dispute has been presented to the Secretary by the producer or any other person and the Secretary has determined to adjudicate such dispute.1/

The payment of benefits to growers was conditional upon the observance of the above labor conditions. However, crop benefit payments were made on the 1934 crop, while the labor provisions applied to conditions of work only on the 1935 and subsequent beet crops. The non-applicability of the labor provisions with respect to the 1934 crop was due to the fact that at the time the sugar beet contract was approved, the crop had been delivered to the beet factories or was in process of being harvested.2/ This, of course, made it impossible to apply the labor provisions that year.

The only labor provision in the sugar beet contract which was enforced with respect to the work done on the 1934 crop was that relating to prompt and full payment of wages. But the enforcement of even this provision was made difficult by the fact that many beet workers had neglected to sign contracts with their employers on the assumption that the

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1/ These labor provisions were also included in the sugar cane production-adjustment contracts for Louisiana, Puerto Rico, the Filipino Islands, Florida, and Hawaii. But in addition to the measures authorized in the sugar beet contract, the contracts for Florida and Hawaii permitted limitation of hours of work and extension of the scope of the labor provisions to the laborers engaged in the processing and marketing of cane.

2/ W. T. Ham, "Regulation of Labour Conditions in Sugar Cultivation under the Agricultural Adjustment Act," International Labour Review, January, 1936, p. 80.

Government would set wage rates for the 1934 season. The determination of what constituted a bona fide wage claim was, therefore, difficult to establish in many cases. To meet this situation, settlement committees composed of persons elected by the growers were established. The great majority of the complaints were settled by these committees. Those which remained unsettled were dealt with by an agent of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Over 1,400 cases were handled in this way.[1]

Labor standards were inserted specifically relating to minimum age and hours of employment of children in the sugar beet contract, but none were made for wage rates or terms of adult employment. The minimum wage provisions in the contract gave the Secretary of Agriculture the right to set minimum rates of wages and to determine the time and method of wage payment only when and if the occasion arose. The Secretary adopted the policy of exercising this right only when growers and laborers were themselves unable to come to terms. The producer agreed to abide by such determination when and if the Secretary made such finding.

The only wage finding which the Secretary of Agriculture made in accordance with the provisions of the sugar beet contract under the Act was in April 1935. But this finding affected only the chief beet producing area of the country, namely that of the Rocky Mountain States. No requests for such action were received from any other beet producing areas. This determination was made necessary when growers and beet workers were unable to agree voluntarily on terms affecting working

1/ Ibid., p. 80.

conditions for the 1935 growing season, and only after numerous requests for such action from beet workers, beet growers, and processors. 1/

Under this pressure, public hearings were held in March 1935. The beet workers requested a flat rate of $23 per acre in the beet fields of all the Rocky Mountain States, except those of Montana. In Montana, the workers sought the higher rate of $27. The organized beet growers offered a wage rate of $12 to $14 per acre in southern Colorado and a rate of $19.40 per acre in Montana. The growers made no cash offers for work performed in the beet fields of the other Rocky Mountain States. They offered instead a $22\frac{1}{2}$ per cent share contract. But this offer was so objectionable to the workers that it was dropped as a serious consideration. 2/

After public hearings in April 1935, the Secretary of Agriculture issued his "Determination in re Minimum Wage Rates for 1935 for Sugar Beet Workers." The minimum wage rates affected beet field labor in four areas comprising 28 beet sugar districts in Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana. This included practically all the producers

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1/ Two associations of beet growers - the Southern Colorado Beet Growers' Association, and the Montana-Wyoming Beet Growers' Association - requested the Secretary of Agriculture to make the determination. The Mountain States Beet Growers' Association, also, notified him that it had failed to agree with the laborers regarding the terms of the labor contract for 1935. Similarly, no agreement had been reached in Nebraska. In addition, the Secretary of Agriculture received 21 petitions with signatures of over 2,000 beet laborers and representatives of beet laborers' associations requesting him to make minimum wage determinations with respect to the 1935 crop.

2/ W. T. Ham, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

in these districts. The Determination prescribed a scale of payment for the 1935 season's work which under conditions of normal yield ranged from $17.50 per acre in southern Colorado, to $21.50 per acre in Montana and parts of Wyoming. Although these rates were lower than those sought by the beet workers, they were about 40 per cent higher than what they had received in 1933, and about 15 per cent higher than what they received in 1934. The following table shows the wage rates per acre for all work performed in 1933, 1934, and 1935 in the four States:

Total Wage Rates Per Acre Paid to Beet Workers During the Seasons 1933-1935[a]

Region	1933	1934	1935[b]
Southern Colorado	$12.00	$15.00	$17.50
Northern Colorado	13.50	18.00	19.50
Nebraska & southern Wyoming	13.50	15.70	19.50
Montana & northern Wyoming	15.00	19.20	21.50

a/ Figures for 1933 and 1934 are maximum total rates per acre, cited by W. T. Ham, "Regulation of Labour Conditions in Sugar Cultivation Under the Agricultural Adjustment Act," *International Labour Review*, January 1936, p. 81. Those for 1935 are minimum wage rates set by the Secretary of Agriculture.

b/ The 1935 wage determinations for the different operations were as follows:

Region	Thinning	1st Hoeing	2nd Hoeing	Pulling & Topping
Southern Colorado	$7.00	$1.75	$1.25	$7.50
Northern Colorado	7.50	1.75	1.25	9.00
Nebraska and southern Wyoming	7.50	1.75	1.25	9.00
Montana and northern Wyoming	8.50	2.50	1.50	9.00

The pulling and topping rates of 75 cents a ton were based on a yield of 10 tons per acre in southern Colorado and on a yield of 12 tons per acre in northern Colorado and in Nebraska, Montana and Wyoming. For beets pulled and topped above these yields, additional payment of 60 cents a ton was to be made.

The Secretary's Determination also specified the time of payment for the various classes of work. Payments for bunching and thinning and for the first hoeing were to be payable upon the completion of the first hoeing. Payments for subsequent hoeings were to be payable on or before September 15, 1935. Payment for pulling and topping was to be payable when the work was completed.

The last provision aimed to eliminate the delay in payment of wages to beet workers widely prevalent in previous years. The "hold-back" of $1 an acre of the bunching and thinning rate until after the crop was harvested was not eliminated. 1/ It was further provided that if a laborer ceased work through no fault of his own before the completion of the contract, his wages for work up to that time became payable in full. The Determination required also that, in addition to the payment of cash wages, growers were to provide beet workers free of charge, with the perquisites customary in the factory district and usually specified in the standard labor contracts in use in that district. 2/

The Secretary's Determination covered contract wage labor only. It was necessary, therefore, to define the status of contract share labor which also is part, although a small part, of the labor supply in the production of beets. Accordingly, on May 4, 1935, the Secretary

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1/ The practice of withholding $1 per acre for work performed in the early part of the season is followed by growers as a guarantee of the faithful performance of the contract entered into by the beet worker. The practice is opposed by the workers.

2/ These usually include a habitable house, suitable water, a garden plot, transportation for laborers and baggage from nearest railroad station to the farm, prior to the beginning of the hand-labor operations, and from the farm to the nearest railroad station upon completion of the work contracted.

issued a supplementary statement which set forth that share contracts for beet labor might be entered into provided that the sharecropper be granted a certain minimum income and that payments be made at certain specified times. It stipulated "that the sharecropper was to be guaranteed by the producer a total minimum income of not less than 90 per cent of the amount which such sharecropper would have received if employed on a cash basis under the rates specified in the determination." 1/ Payments to the sharecropper were to be made at the time specified in the wage determination, save in the case of the payment for harvesting, which was to be made as and when the grower received his payment from the sugar company. 2/

These provisions removed the features regarded most favorably by the growers in their contractual relationship with share tenants or sharecroppers. As a result, the use of share labor in beet work declined greatly.

1/ W. T. Ham, "Regulation of Labour Conditions in Sugar Cultivation Under the Agricultural Adjustment Act," International Labour Review, January 1936, p. 81.

2/ In addition, sharecroppers were to continue to receive their share of the benefit payments made to the grower by the AAA as required by sections 24 and 25 of the Production-Adjustment Contract. Also, under the terms of the contract, share tenants and sharecroppers were given protection against being dispossessed from the land removed from cultivation in accordance with the production-adjustment program. Section 8 of the contract stipulated that "the producer agrees that he will not reduce the number of share tenants or sharecroppers engaged in growing sugar beets on this farm in the crop years 1935 and/or 1936 below the number so engaged, if any, in 1934, because of the reduction in sugar-beet acreage and sugar-beet production, or because of any other provisions in this contract."

The wage rates in the Secretary's Determination were incorporated into the usual labor contracts for the 1935 season. During that season, no labor disputes occurred in the sugar beet areas in which it was necessary for the Secretary of Agriculture to exercise his authority to adjudicate. The one dispute which did occur was adjudicated by the Secretary of Agriculture before the terms of the Sugar Beet Production-Adjustment Contract went into effect. 1/

IV. The economic justification for the continuation of labor standards under the Sugar Act of 1937.

Two studies of working and living conditions of sugar beet workers in 1935 are of interest since they cover the year when the Jones-Costigan Act was in force. 2/ These conditions demonstrated the necessity for continuing the labor standards under the new Sugar Act of 1937.

1/ In October 1934 a dispute over wages between growers and beet workers in Nebraska was adjudicated by the Secretary of Agriculture. This settlement, was not undertaken under the terms of the Sugar Beet Production-Adjustment Contract. In fact, at the time of the disagreement the Contract had not been placed in the hands of the growers. However, the rates specified in the settlement by the Secretary of Agriculture represented the minimum wages which section 10(b) of the Contract gave him power to set. W. T. Ham, *op. cit.*, footnote, p. 82.

2/ Olaf F. Larson, *Beet Workers on Relief in Weld County, Colorado*, Colorado State Agricultural Experiment Station, Division of Social Research, Federal WPA Research Bulletin No. 4, 1937 (mimeographed); and Children's Bureau 1935 Survey of *Social and Economic Conditions Among Sugar Beet Laborers' Families in Wyoming, Montana, Minnesota and Michigan*. (Unpublished) Preliminary findings of the latter study are summarized by Elizabeth S. Johnson, "Wages, Employment Conditions, and Welfare of Sugar Beet Laborers," *Monthly Labor Review*, Febtuary 1938.

A study of the earnings of 192 beet working families on relief in Weld County, Northern Colorado, showed an average as low as $222 earned per family from beet work at the end of the 1935 season. The average earnings per family from sources other than beet work or public assistance was reported as amounting to only $42. These families reported that they received an average amount of $172 from project work of the WPA and other public aid during the year ended February 1936. This was almost as much as their average 1935 beet earnings and about 40 per cent of the average annual income of $436 which they received from all sources that year. 1/

The other survey of working and living conditions of beet workers during the year in which the Jones-Costigan Act was in operation was made in Northern Wyoming, Montana, Minnesota and Michigan. This study, which was not limited to families receiving relief, revealed that the average (median) annual 1935 earnings of 377 families were $340. Almost one-third of the families earned less than $200. 2/ The significance of these low earnings from beet work is emphasized when it is realized that they were earnings of whole families, averaging 6.4 members each and three beet workers each.

Earnings of individual workers for that year (1935) were not more than $130 in half of the 377 families. They were less than $100 a year per worker in one-third of these families. In only 38 per cent of the

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1/ Olaf F. Larson, op. cit., pp 5 and 11.

2/ Elizabeth S. Johnson, "Wages, Employment Conditions, and Welfare of Sugar Beet Laborers," Monthly Labor Review, February 1938, p. 336.

families did they equal $150 or more per worker.[1] The meagerness of these incomes is suggested by a comparison with the amount of money needed to buy an adequate diet at minimum cost. According to the standards of the Bureau of Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture, an adequate diet, based on average United States prices in 1935 and calculated on the basis of the composition of beet laborers' families, required an expenditure of $110 per person.[2]

The investigation also showed that beet field workers in the four States had practically no employment during the six winter months and only occasional employment during August and September when the beet crop requires little or no attention. One family in eight of the 377 families interviewed stated that it had received no cash income whatever in addition to earnings from beet work. Among the families that did receive some supplementary cash income, the average (median) amount earned or otherwise received was $51 a family for the year ending with the close of the 1935 beet season. The average (median) annual income per family supplementary to beet earnings and relief in that year varied from $31 in the Arkansas Valley of Colorado to $93 in central Michigan.[3] This additional income was usually for agricultural labor on crops other than beets.

The low annual earnings from all sources, revealed in the above survey, forced the great majority of beet workers to seek relief in the

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1/ Ibid., p. 336.

2/ U. S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, "Income and Living Conditions of Sugar Beet Laborers' Families," The Child, January 1938.

3/ Elizabeth S. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 336 and 337.

fall of 1935. About 65 per cent of the beet laborers' families reported receiving either direct or work relief at some time within the period of approximately a year ending with the close of the 1935 beet season. Fifty per cent of these families received such relief in at least six calendar months in the 12-month period ended October 31, 1935. The proportion of the beet workers' families which were on relief at some time during the year ranged from 37 per cent in some areas to 97 per cent in other areas. In the Arkansas Valley in Southern Colorado where average beet acreages worked were small and wages low, the proportion of families receiving relief was highest.[1/]

The Jones-Costigan Act failed also to effect large reductions in child labor in the beet fields. The Children's Bureau 1935 survey showed a considerable number of children under 14 years of age at work at beets that year. In addition to children of this age, the Bureau found that over 90 per cent of the 400 children of 14 and 15 years of age in the beet working families interviewed worked in the beet fields that year. In addition, despite the maximum eight-hour working day provision in the production-adjustment contracts under the Jones-Costigan Act, about half of the children of 14 and 15 years of age to be working usually 10 or more hours a day during the 1935 season. Child workers even under 14 years of age were usually working 12 or more hours a day in thinning beets. Only about 20 per cent of these child workers were reported to have had usual working hours of less than eight a day at this process.[2/]

1/ Ibid., p. 337.

2/ United States Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Press Release, March 28, 1937.

V. Operation and Administration of the Sugar Act.

The Sugar Act of 1937 provided for the continuation, until December 31, 1940, of the sugar-quota system, of the processing tax on sugar and of conditional benefit payments to growers of sugar beets and sugar cane, established under the Jones-Costigan Act in 1934. But, whereas under the Jones-Costigan Act the detailed terms of these provisions were inserted in the Production-Adjustment Contract entered into by the Secretary of Agriculture and the grower, they are now incorporated in the Act itself. By eliminating the Federal contract, the Sugar Act of 1937 overcame one of the basic reasons advanced for the invalidation of the Jones-Costigan Act by the United States Supreme Court.

The 1937 Act authorized conditional payments to growers of sugar beets and sugar cane who (a) comply with certain soil conservation practices, (b) limit production to quantities not in excess of the proportionate share assigned to their farms, and (c) maintain the following labor standards:1/

1. No child under the age of 14 years, except a member of the immediate family of the grower, shall be employed or permitted to work on the farm and that no child between the ages of 14 and 16 years shall be employed for a period longer than eight hours in any one day.

2. All persons employed on the farm in the production, cultivation or harvesting of sugar beets or sugar cane with respect to which an application for payment is made shall be paid in full and at rates not less than those that may be determined by the Secretary to be fair and reasonable after investigation and due notice and opportunity for public hearing.2/

1/ The Act also provided for a determination by the Secretary of Agriculture of "fair and reasonable" rates to be paid for sugar beets purchased by processors who apply as producers for payments under the Act.

2/ Public Act No. 414 - 75th Congress, 1st Session, H.R. 7667, Title III, Sec. 301(a) and (b).

A. The Secretary's determination of minimum wage rates for harvesting the 1937 crop.

After a series of public hearings in October 1937, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration announced in January 1938 the determination of minimum wages to be paid sugar beet laborers for the harvesting of the 1937 crop after September 1 of that year. 1/ These rates represented increases over the average rates actually in effect during the harvesting of the crop in that year. The determination established the minimum wage rate of $1.07 per ton for harvesting sugar beets yielding more than seven tons but less than eight tons per acre. This was 12 cents more than the per ton rate in effect during the prevailing harvesting season, or an increase of about 15 per cent. For beets harvested on acres yielding more than eight tons, additional payment was provided. 2/ The minimum rate for harvesting beets yielding less than seven tons per acre was 12 cents more than the prevailing rates in effect. 3/ It was estimated that the

1/ Since the Act was passed in September 1937, it was not possible to set minimum wage rates for the work of bunching, thinning or hoeing performed in the spring and summer of the year. The Act, therefore, applied to labor performed after September 1, 1937, the date on which it became effective.

2/ The additional payments per ton of beets in fields yielding more than eight tons per acre were as follows:

8 tons or more but less than 9 tons	- $1.03
9 " " " " " " 10 "	- 1.00
10 " " " " " " 11 "	- .97
11 " " " " " " 12 "	- .95
12 " " " " " " 13 "	- .93
13 " " " " " " 14 "	- .92
14 " " " " " " 15 "	- .91
15 " " " " " " 16 "	- .90
16 " " " " " " 17 "	- .89
17 " " " " " " 18 "	- .88
18 " " " " " " 19 "	- .88
19 tons or more - - - - - - - - - - - -	.87

3/ A similar determination established minimum wages for the harvesting of sugar cane in Louisiana on November 12, 1937.

increase in the rates for harvesting operations was equivalent to an increase of $239,000 in total wages for beet workers in 1937 in Colorado alone. 1/

Very soon after this determination, the procedure for computing minimum wage rates for harvesting the 1937 sugar beet crop was changed from a per ton to a per acre basis of payment. The revision was intended to facilitate administration of the minimum wage provisions It did not change the basic wage rate increase of 12 cents per ton established earlier. The revised rates called for a minimum payment of $7.50 per acre for harvesting of sugar beets where the average yield of the farm was seven tons or less per acre. It also provided for an additional payment of 75 cents for each ton of beets harvested in excess of seven tons on each acre.

The revised determination further stipulated that every farmer who qualified for payment was obliged to pay his laborers the full amount agreed to, even though this may be above the minimum rate established in the determination. However, the Act was enacted too late in the year to deduct the amount of wages unpaid in 1937 from the benefit payments made to qualified producers in that year.

B. Minimum wage determination for 1938.

The determination of minimum wage rates for all operations connected with beet work in 1938 was announced in April of that year. In

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1/ Reports to the Second Annual Convention, District 3, United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America, January 21-22, 1939, Denver, Colorado.

accordance with the Act, the determination followed a number of public hearings held in January and February of the year in the sugar beet producing areas, and were based on evidence presented at those hearings.

The determination provided a separate scale of minimum wages in each of seven districts. The total rate per acre in each of these districts was as follows: 1/

District	States	Rate per acre a/ (dollars)
One	Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin	18.00
Two	Minnesota and Iowa	18.80 b/ 16.80 15.80
Three	Kansas	21.30
Four	Nebraska, Colorado, southern Wyoming, South Dakota, Utah Oregon and Idaho	22.80
Five	Montana and northern Wyoming	24.30
Six	Northern California and Washington	23.06
Seven	Southern California	20.40

1/ The determination provided also that growers who produced sugar beets in States not included in the seven specified districts were to be governed by rates applying in States in which they market their beets. Thus, the rates in the States comprising District One applied to Illinois; those in Minnesota applied to eastern North Dakota; the rates in Montana and northern Wyoming applied to western North Dakota; the rates in Colorado applied to New Mexico.

a/ The aggregate rate of all operations connected with beet work; blocking and thinning; hoeing and weeding; and pulling and topping.

b/ The total minimum rate per acre varied in this district because the minimum rates for blocking and thinning were different with the type of field on which these operations were performed.

The minimum wage rates per acre established for each of the operations connected with beet work in 1938 were as follows:

District	States	Rates per acre (dollars): Blocking and thinning	First hoeing	Second hoeing or weeding	Pulling and topping
One	Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin	11.00a/	-	-	7.00b/
Two	Minnesota & Iowa	12.50c/ 10.50d/ 9.50e/	-	-	6.30f/
Three	Kansas	7.50	2.00	1.00	10.80g/
Four	Nebraska, Colorado southern Wyoming, South Dakota, Utah, Oregon, Idaho	8.00	2.50	1.50	10.80h/
Five	Montana, northern Wyoming	9.50	2.50	1.50	10.80h/
Six	Northern California i/ and Washington	7.50	2.00	1.50	12.96j/
Seven	Southern California k/	6.00	1.75	1.25	11.40l/

a/ Included hoeing. b/ For work in fields yielding seven tons or less per acre; for beets pulled and topped above these yields, and additional payment of $1 a ton was to be made. c/ Included hoeing; the rate was for work done by the "old method" or in "Hill dropped" fields. d/ Included hoeing; the rate was for work done in "blocked" fields. e/ Included hoeing; the rate was for work done in "cross cultivated" fields. f/ For work in fields yielding seven tons or less per acre; for beets pulled and topped above these yields, an additional payment of 90 cents a ton was to be made. g/ For work in fields yielding 12 tons or less per acre; for beets pulled and topped above these yields, an additional payment of 80 cents a ton was to be made. h/ For work in fields yielding 12 tons or less per acre; for beets pulled and topped above these yields, an additional payment of 80 cents a ton was to be made. Also, where loading was performed by the same laborers doing the topping, 10 cents per ton was to be added to the topping rates. i/ The determination provides also for the following hourly rates for all operations in this district: topping 50 cents an hour; loading, 45 cents an hour; blocking and thinning, 40 cents an hour; and hoeing or weeding, 35 cents an hour. j/ Assuming a yield of 12 tons per acre at the determined rate of $1.08 per ton for pulling, topping, and loading. The rates for these operations ranged from 83 cents per ton for yields of 20 or more tons per acre to $2.23 per ton for yields up to 4 tons per acre. k/ The determination provides also for the following hourly rates for all operations in this district: topping, 45 cents an hour; loading, 40 cents an hour; blocking and thinning, 35 cents an hour; and hoeing, 30 cents an hour. l/ Assuming a yield of 12 tons per acre at the determined rate of 95 cents per ton for pulling, topping, and loading. The rates for these operations ranged from 69 cents per ton for yields of 17 or more tons per acre to $1.50 per ton for yields up to six tons per acre.

The determination was not to affect any wages higher than those which may have been agreed upon between growers and beet workers. The Secretary's determinations were the minimum rates that had to be paid before a grower received a benefit payment on his crops. It also required the producer to furnish the beet worker, without charge, and in addition to the cash wages specified, the perquisites customarily furnished by him, such as house, garden plot, and similar incidentals.

In August 1938 the AAA announced that producers would receive their 1938 sugar beet payments only after all persons employed in the production, cultivation, or harvesting of the 1938 crop had been paid in full. The only exceptions to this order were a few cases in California where sugar beet operations were completed at an early date and growers had already paid laborers and were unable to locate those laborers to whom additional wages were due.

The minimum wage rates established by the Secretary of Agriculture for the 1938 sugar beet season were considerably higher than the actual rates in effect in 1937 in practically all the beet growing regions of the country. For example in Colorado and Nebraska, the Secretary's wage determination of $22.70 for 1938 was equivalent to an increase of $2.30 per acre over 1937 wages. It was estimated that the gain in wage rates meant an increase of about $340,000 in total wages paid out in Colorado and an increase of about $347,000 paid out in Nebraska.[1/] In northern Wyoming and Montana, the 1938 minimum wage rates were $1.30 more than the

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1/ Reports to the Second Annual Convention of District 3, The United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America, January 21-22, 1939, Denver, Colorado.

actual rates in 1937. Estimates indicate that this rise represented a total wage increase of about $159,000 for beet workers in Wyoming and almost $100,000 for those in Montana. 1/ Considerable increases in wage rates were recorded also for beet laborers in northern and southern California. No changes were made for Michigan and Ohio in 1938 as compared with 1937.

The harvesting wage rates established in the spring of 1938 were revised in September of that year. 2/ These changes were made upon the requests from the field for adjustments and after field investigations were conducted by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The revisions did not alter substantially the labor cost of the producer nor the earnings of the beet workers. The new rates merely adopted the administration of the wage provisions of the program to fit the customary practices of the areas affected. 3/

In the State of Washington for example, the sliding scale of wage payment for harvesting work, established in April 1938, was re-

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1/ Ibid.

2/ In addition to providing for changes in harvesting wage rates, certain changes were made in the designation of beet areas in California for rate making purposes. These changes provided that producers in the following California counties were to be governed by the wage rates established for southern California regardless of the location of factories to which beets are delivered: Imperial, San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Kern, Kings, Tulare, and Fresno. Producers in other counties in California, in Klamath County, Oregon, and in Perishing County, Nevada, were to be governed by the rates for northern California.

3/ Sugar beet producers who had applied for 1938 benefit payments under the sugar program were affected in only four States: Washington, Utah, Idaho and eastern Colorado.

placed by a flat rate. The new rate provided for payments of 70 cents per ton for topping and 30 cents per ton for loading. It was estimated that the new rates were about equal to the former rates on the basis of average yields per acre.1/ On the other hand, in Utah, Idaho and eastern Oregon, the former flat wage rates were superseded by a sliding scale of rates. These revisions represented slight increases for yields up to and including 12 tons per acre and small decreases for yields above these amounts.2/ It was estimated, however, that, for average yields, the new scale of rates were approximately the same as the former flat rates.

C. Minimum wage determination for 1939.

1. California

Minimum wages to be paid sugar beet workers during the 1939 season by producers who qualified for payments under the Sugar Act of 1937 was determined first for California. The determination for California was issued before that for other beet growing regions of the country

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1/ Assuming a yield of 12 tons per acre, the former rate was $1.08 per ton for pulling, topping and loading. The rates for these operations ranged from 83 cents per ton for yields of 20 or more tons per acre to $2.23 per ton for yields up to four tons per acre.

2/ The flat wage rates for pulling and topping established in the earlier determination for the States of Utah, Idaho and eastern Oregon were: 90 cents per ton up to and including yields of 12 tons per acre, and 80 cents per ton for yields in excess of 12 tons. Also, an addition of 10 cents per ton was provided for loading operations. The revised wage rates, combining the payment for topping and loading work, were as follows:

Yields per acre (net tons)	Rate per ton for topping & loading (dollars)	Yields per acre (net tons)	Rate per ton for topping & loading (dollars)
Below 8	$1.15	Below 13	$.97
8	1.12	14	.95
9	1.09	15	.93
10	1.06	16	.92
11	1.03	17	.91
12	1.00	18 or more	.90

because the sugar beet season commences there much earlier. Public hearings were held in August and the determination was announced in November 1938.

With the exception of slight modifications in the sliding scale of payment for the harvesting operations of topping and loading, the rates established for California for 1939 did not alter substantially those established for 1938. The rates, including perquisites customarily furnished, were as follows:

Region	Rates per acre (dollars)				
	Blocking and Thinning	First Hoeing	Second and subsequent hoeings	Topping and Loading	Total
Northern[1/] California	7.50[a/]	2.00[c/]	1.50[e/]	12.72[g/]	23.72
Southern[2/] California	6.50[b/]	1.50[d/]	1.00[f/]	11.52[h/]	20.52

1/ Applicable (a) to farms located in counties in California other than those specified in Southern California; and (b) to farms located outside of California from which sugar beets are contracted to be delivered to factories situated in counties in California other than those specified in southern California.

2/ Applied to farms located in the following counties: Imperial, Santa Barbara, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Orange, Kern, Riverside, Kings, San Bernardino, Tulare, Los Angeles, Fresno, Ventura.

a/ Or 40 cents per hour.
b/ Or 35 cents per hour.
c/ Or 35 cents per hour.
d/ Or 30 cents per hour.
e/ Or 35 cents per hour.
f/ Or 30 cents per hour.

g/ Assuming a yield of 12 tons per acre at the determined wage rate of $1.06 per ton for topping and loading. The rates for topping and loading, according to the Secretary's determination, ranged from 79 cents per ton for yields of 20 or more tons per acre to $2.28 per ton for yields below five tons per acre. The minimum rate per hour for these operations was set at 45 cents per hour.

h/ Assuming a yield of 12 tons per acre at the determined wage rate of 96 cents per ton for topping and loading. The rates for topping and loading, according to the Secretary's determination, ranged from 69 cents per ton for yields of 20 or more tons per acre to $1.93 per ton for yields below five tons per acre. The minimum rate per hour for these operations was set at 40 cents per hour.

2. Other beet growing regions.

After investigations and following a series of public hearings held in January of 1939, minimum wages to be paid in 1939 by qualified producers in the rest of the beet growing regions of the country were announced in March. The general level of the wage rates for the United States as a whole was about four per cent below that of the previous year, but about five per cent above the level in 1936, the year prior to the passage of the Sugar Act of 1937.

For the purpose of the 1939 determination, the sugar beet producing areas were divided into nine districts, within each of which a scale of minimum wage rates for the different operations was prescribed. The total rate per acre established in these districts was as follows:

District	States	Rate per acre[a/] (dollars)
One	Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin	18.00
Two	Minnesota and Iowa	17.40[b/] 15.90 14.90
Three	Kansas	20.60
Four	Nebraska, Colorado, southern Wyoming and South Dakota	21.60
Five	Southern and eastern Montana and northern Wyoming	23.10
Six	Western Montana	23.10
Seven	Northern Montana	24.90
Eight	Utah, Idaho and Oregon	22.64
Nine	Washington	23.00

a/ The aggregate rate of all operations connected with beet work: blocking and thinning; hoeing and weeding; pulling and topping.

b/ The total minimum rate per acre varied in this district because the minimum rates for blocking and thinning differed with the type of field on which these operations were performed.

The minimum wage rates per acre established for each of the operations connected with beet work in 1939 were as follows:

District		Rates per acre (dollars) Blocking and Thinning	First hoeing	Second Hoeing or weeding	Pulling and Topping
One	Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin	11.00 a/	-	-	7.00 b/
Two	Minnesota & Iowa	12.00 c/ 10.50 d/ 9.50 e/			5.40 f/
Three	Kansas	8.00	2.00	1.00	9.60 g/
Four	Nebraska, Colorado, southern Wyoming and South Dakota	8.00	2.50	1.50	9.60 g/
Five	Southern & eastern Montana & northern Wyoming	9.50	2.50	1.50	9.60 g/
Six	Western Montana	8.50	3.00	2.00	9.60 g/
Seven	Northern Montana	8.50	3.00	2.00	11.40 h/
Eight	Utah, Idaho, Oregon	8.00	2.00	1.00	11.64 i/
Nine	Washington	7.50 j/	2.00 k/	1.50 l/	12.00 m/

a/ Included hoeing. b/ Assuming a yield of 7 tons per acre at the fixed rate of $1.00 per ton. The rates for topping ranged from 80¢ per ton for yields of 16 or more tons per acre to $1.50 per ton for yields below 4 tons per acre. c/ Included hoeing; rate for work done by the "old method" or in "hill drop" fields. d/ Included hoeing; rate for work done in "blocked" fields. e/ Included hoeing; rate for work done in "cross cultivated" fields. f/ Minimum rate for topping was 90¢ for each ton up to and including 7 tons per acre. For beets topped above these yields an additional payment of 80¢ was to be made for each ton per acre above 7 tons. The minimum rate set per acre was $5.40. g/ Minimum rate for topping was 80¢ for each ton up to and including 12 tons per acre. For beets topped above these yields an additional payment of 70¢ was to be made for each ton per acre above 12 tons. h/ Minimum rate for topping and loading was 95¢ for each ton up to and including 12 tons per acre. For beets topped and loaded above these yields an additional payment of 85¢ was to be made for each ton per acre above 12 tons. i/ Assuming a yield of 12 tons per acre at the determined wage rate of 97¢ per ton for topping and loading. The rates for topping and loading ranged from 85¢ per ton for yields of 18 tons per acre to $1.30 per ton for yields of six or less tons per acre. It was stipulated also that when topping and loading are performed by different persons, 30 per cent of the rates for topping and loading was to be paid for loading. j/ Or 40¢ per hour. k/ Or 35¢ per hour. l/ Or 35¢ per hour. m/ Assuming a yield of 12 tons per acre at the determined wage rate of 70¢ per ton for topping and 30¢ per ton for loading. The minimum rate per hour for these operations was set at 45¢ an hour.

The 1939 determination also specified that if unusual circumstances necessitated the employment of labor on other than a piece-rate basis, or if the use of special machine methods of cultivation or harvesting reduced the amount of labor required as compared with the common method in use in the area, the minimum wage rate was to be that agreed upon between the producer and the laborer. In both cases the rate was made subject to the approval of the AAA State Committee which was to insure its equivalence to the piece rate specified for such work in the determination. When wage rates higher than the foregoing were agreed upon between growers and laborers, payment of such rates was required.

The determination also provided that the producer furnish to the laborer, without charge, the accessories customarily supplied by him, such as a house and garden plot. Also, as in previous announcements, the Sugar Division of the Department of Agriculture, called the attention of the beet growers to the importance of paying their workers in full if they expected to receive their benefit payments.

The total wage rates per acre, provided either in the printed labor-contract forms issued by associations of growers or by sugar companies, or provided in the Secretary's determination, for certain important sugar beet producing areas for the five years 1935 to 1939, are shown below:

Total Wage Rates Per Acre for Hand Labor in Sugar-Beet
Fields in Selected Areas, 1935-1939a/

Area	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Colorado and Nebraska	$19.50 1/	$19.50 1/	$20.50 1/	$22.80	$21.60
Northern Wyoming and Montana	21.50 2/	21.50 2/	23.00 2/	24.30 2/	23.10 6/
Michigan and Ohio	19.00 3/	17.20 3/	18.00 3/	18.00	18.00
Minnesota	15.00 4/	18.[illegible]0 4/	18.[illegible]0 4/	18.80	17.40
Northern California			21.42	23.96	23.72
Southern California			17.95	20.40	20.52

a/ The 1935 wage rates for Colorado and western Nebraska, for northern Wyoming and southern Montana are the minimum rates which were established by the Secretary of Agriculture under the Jones-Costigan Act and were specified in the labor-contract forms used in these areas in 1935. The rates for southern Michigan and Ohio in 1935 are those provided in the agreement between the beet laborers' union and growers' association in that year. The 1935 wage rates in Minnesota and central Michigan and the 1936 and 1937 wage rates in all of the selected areas are those provided in the suggested labor-contract forms prepared by the growers' associations or the sugar company dominant in the area. The 1937 wage rates for northern and for southern California are those for one large factory district in each of the two parts of the State, and do not indicate the extent these rates are typical for each of these areas. The 1938 and 1939 rates are the minimum rates established by the Secretary of Agriculture under the Sugar Act of 1937.

1/ Rates for northern Colorado and Western Nebraska; the rates for southern Colorado were as follows: $17.50 in 1935; $16.25 in 1936; and $18.10 in 1937.
2/ Rates for southern Montana; rates for southern Wyoming were: $19.50 in 1935 and $22.80 in 1938.
3/ Rates for southern Michigan; the rates for central Michigan were as follows: $15.00 in 1935; $16.00 in 1936; and $17.00 in 1937.
4/ Rates for southern Minnesota.
6/ Rates for southern and eastern Montana; rates for western Montana and for northern Montana were $23.10 and $24.90, respectively.

VI. Enforcement of the labor provisions of the Sugar Control Acts.

A. Child Labor.

Under the terms of the Sugar Production Adjustment Contract which implemented the Jones-Costigan Act of 1934, the children of only hired laborers were given protection. Child beet growers of families of bona fide producers 1/ and of the immediate families of bona fide tenants 2/ were exempted. The Sugar Act of 1937 extended similar protection to child labor. The term "bona fide producer", however, is more explicitly defined and the definition is specifically inserted in the Act. 3/

Protests against the child labor provisions came from beet laborers themselves, who complained that such restrictions forced them to hire outside labor in order to complete on time the work on the acreages for which they had contracted. This, they claimed, reduced the total family earnings from beet work. Contract beet workers also expressed resentment that the child labor provisions did not apply to children of the growers' own families who now competed for employment against them. 4/ By large, however, parents accepted the child labor

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1/ Bona fide producers were those who signed the production-control contract, or those who supplied capital equipment and were actually in charge of farm operations.

2/ Bona fide tenants were those who supplied a substantial amount of equipment or other capital in the production of the crop and who managed or participated actively in the farming operations of the land which they were leasing.

3/ Under the Sugar Act of 1937, the term "bona fide producer" is defined as a person who is the legal owner of at least 40 per cent of the crop at the time such work is performed.

4/ Charles E. Gibbons, "The Beet Fields Revisited", The American Child, September 1936, p. 1.

regulations "as fair and reasonable, providing a measure of protection for their children which would not have come, had not the government stepped in and established standards." 1/

Despite the absence of systematic machinery for obtaining evidence of the age of children working in beets, and the lack of frequent inspection of beet fields during working periods, the number and proportion of children employed in beet work declined during the operation of the Jones-Costigan Act. This decline was achieved by warnings to growers regarding the terms of the child-labor standards in the production-adjustment contracts and by reliance on complaints of violation of these terms. The grower had the assurance of benefit payments if he fulfilled the terms of the agreement with the Government. He, therefore, made efforts to see that his contract laborers complied with the child labor regulations. The laborers, in turn, had the hope of increased wages and probably felt it less necessary to use their children. The National Child Labor Committee reported, for example, that "statements by land owners, renters and laborers indicated that the child labor provisions of the 1935 contracts have been carried out both in the letter and spirit of the law." 2/

In the fall of 1935, a year and a half after the passage of the Act, the Children's Bureau made an effort to measure the effect of its

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1/ Ibid.

2/ Ibid.

child labor provisions on the volume of child employment in the beet fields. A preliminary report of its findings revealed the following changes in employment of children in beet work in 1935, (the only year when the Jones-Costigan Act was in force) as compared with 1934:1/

1. In 1934, of the 1410 children between the ages of six and 14 years in beet-working families, 43 per cent worked in the beet fields; in 1935, out of approximately the same number of children of these ages (1491) in beet working families, only 19 per cent were found so employed.

2. The decrease in the proportion working in 1935 as compared with 1934 was most marked for the children under 12 years of age. Of these, 28 per cent worked in 1934 and only nine per cent, in 1935.

3. Of the 12-and 13-year old children in families interviewed, 83 per cent worked in 1934 compared with 50 per cent in 1935.2/

4. The decline of child labor was greater in the mountain States beet region than in the eastern beet region. But the effect of the child labor provisions on the volume of child labor cut across these two major beet producing areas. Thus, in 1935 the work of children under 12 years of age was practically eliminated in four areas:

1/ The Bureau interviewed the families of 946 hired sugar-beet workers engaged in hand work in the sugar beet fields of Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, Minnesota and Michigan. These findings, therefore, refer only to children of hired beet laborers and not to children of beet growers.

2/ U. S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Press Release, March 28, 1937.

> In the Billings, Montana, and the Blinsfield, Michigan areas, no child under 12 was reported as working at beets; in the Weld County, Colorado, and Sidney, Montana, areas, less than two per cent of the children of these ages was reported to have worked in beet culture. On the other hand, the proportion of children of these ages working in the beet fields of central Michigan was found to be the highest, namely, 29 per cent. In Minnesota and Worland, Wyoming, areas, the proportions were 16.5 and 15 per cent, respectively.1/

Following the invalidation of the Jones- Costigan Act in January 1936, child labor increased in the beet fields. A student of child labor problems who revisited the beet fields of Nebraska and Colorado in the Summer of 1936, when the Jones-Costigan Act was no longer operative, for the purpose of determining what effect the removal of the child labor restrictions had on the employment of children, reported as follows: "In family after family children who were not permitted to work last year (1935) were again carrying their full load in beets—even the 7-and 8-year olds. Hours are absolutely unregulated and even the youngest frequently toil from sunup to sundown."2/

Under the Sugar Act of 1937, reliance on enforcement is placed upon complaints of beet workers, and upon the associations of producers. The local AAA production-control committees established in each factory district are required to secure compliance when and if the complaint is made. There is still no provision for frequent and systematic checking of the existence of child labor in the beet fields . Age certificates

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1/ Memorandum of March 4, 1936, to Joshua Bernhardt, Chief of the Sugar Section, Agricultural Adjustment Administration; cited in W. T. Ham, "Sugar Beet Field Labor Under the AAA," Journal of Farm Economics, May 1937, p. 645.

2/ Charles E. Gibbons, op. cit.

have been required only in a few cases.

All complaints regarding child labor are made in the first instance to the production-control committee. These committees are authorized to make investigations of complaints and to certify that producers have complied with the child labor provisions of the law. The full responsibility of preventing the employment of children younger than the required ages rests upon each producer. The mere statment of a laborer that his children are of the required ages does not relieve the producer of responsibility in the event that the statement of the worker is in error.

If a producer is found by the local production-control committee to be employing children under the required age or of employing children longer than the hours provided in the Act, the case is referred to the field representative of the Sugar Section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration for appropriate action. Violations of the child labor provisions are punished by withholding the benefit payments to growers.

No information is available showing the effects of the child-labor provisions of the Sugar Act of 1937 on the number of children employed in the beet fields or on the daily working hours in recent years.

B. Wages.

By authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to set minimum wages for sugar beet field laborers, the Act provides a floor for wage rates. This provides a basic economic protection. Through its pro-

visions for labor participation in the wage determination, the Act promotes democratization of the wage fixing process. Under its terms, numerous public hearings have been held at which both growers and workers have been represented. Moreover, the Act outlaws, in effect, the practice of withholding a portion of the wages until the crop is harvested. This practice, commonly known as the "holdback" has always been regarded by the beet workers as an abuse of wage payment. The Act has also made it possible for laborers to receive assistance in collecting wages due them once the work is completed.

Public hearings have revealed, however, several challenging administrative problems. Foremost of these has been the difficulty of determining a fair and reasonable wage rate. A complex of factors must be considered in setting the rates: the prevailing market price of sugar beets, the general level of agricultural wages, the cost of living, the annual earnings of sugar beet workers, and the relation between the price of sugar beets and wages in the past. Today the price which the sugar company agrees to pay the growers for beets sets a limit upon the wage which the grower can afford to pay the contract laborer. As a result the level of wages is controlled, for the most part, by the processors. For this reason beet laborers have asked that wage rates be agreed upon before the processors and the growers fix the price for the season's crop.[1/] This request has re-

1/ See "In the matter of hearing (Sugar Hearing 4) before the Secretary of Agriculture with respect to wage rates for persons employed in the production, cultivation, or harvesting of the 1937 sugar beet crop." Session held in Denver, Colorado, October 14, 1937, pp. 60-62; and in Billings, Montana, October 25, 1937, pp. 197-201.

ceived the endorsement of the Industrial Commission of Colorado which recommended, in the spring of 1937, "that the price of beet field labor should be determined or given consideration prior to the time of the establishment of the price for the sale of sugar beets." It suggested that "the price of beet field labor should be one of the determining factors in the establishment of a price for the sale of beets."1/

The further problem arises as to what weight should be given to the loss of earnings due to lack of off-season employment of agricultural beet workers in the determination of wage rates. It has been shown that a considerable number become public charges after the beet growing season comes to a close. It is similarly clear that even if the beet workers' earnings were doubled in the great majority of cases, they would still fail tp provide the minimum American standard of living.

Any increase in wages, however, depends upon the rise in the income of the growers. It is significant that the growers at the public hearings have not attacked wages as being too high. They have pointed out, however, that wages have been out of line with their returns. While the growers' income is in large measure determined by the price of sugar, it is based also upon the share of the sugar dollar which they obtain. To mechanically increase the price of sugar without providing for a more equitable distribution of the proceeds would benefit

1/ Recommendations by the Industrial Commission of Colorado in the Matter of Colorado Conference of Beet Field and Agricultural Workers' Unions, Employees, v. The Great Western Sugar Company and the Sugar Beet Growers of the State of Colorado, Employers, May 7, 1937, p. 2.

the processor more than the grower. It would probably also penalize the consumer several times the amount which the grower would receive, unless the terms of the grower-processor contract was changed.

These are some of the perplexing problems which form the economic background against which the Sugar Act of 1937 must operate.

VII Conclusion.

The Act offers no long-term solution to the problem of low annual incomes of beet workers and of the attendant aspects of poverty accompanying insufficient earnings. It has, however, brought about a material improvement in the working and living conditions of these agricultural laborers. Representatives of these workers have expressed the belief that the Sugar Act has to a large extent accomplished its intent and purpose, and are in favor of its reenactment in 1940. "The Sugar Act of 1937," stated a spokesman of the beet workers, "is one of the best agricultural laws ever enacted by Congress for farmers and agricultural labor and is the only farm law that gives proper recognition to labor." 1/

1/ UCAPAWA News, September 1939, (official publication of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America).

Appendix

The Sugar Beet Growing Industry and its Workers.

1. The industry.

The sugar beet industry is divided into two interdependent economic groups, the agricultural producers and the sugar beet processors. Sugar beets are raised for the most part by farmers under contract with the sugar manufacturing companies which convert the beets into sugar. In 1933, out of 1,047,029 acres planted to sugar beets, 766,343 acres, or almost three-fourths of the total, were worked under the contract system. 1/

The State of Colorado is the largest producer of sugar beets, followed by California and Michigan. But beet raising localities extend from Ohio to California 2/ and are concentrated near the 87 beet sugar factories which are operated by 27 sugar manufacturing companies. In 1936 these factories were supplied with sugar beets by about 75,000 growers who harvested 785,000 acres of beets, or an average of about 10 acres per grower. 3/

In comparison with the production of major agricultural crops such as wheat, cotton, and tobacco, the production of sugar beets is

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1/ J. L. Coulter, U. S. Tariff Commission; letter of November 16, 1933, to A. J. Weaver, Sugar Section AAA; cited in N. Lewis Abbott, Reports for the Committee on Labor Conditions in the Growing of Sugar Beets, Mar 1934, p. 2.

2/ Other States in which the sugar beet crop is important in small areas include Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

3/ Elizabeth S. Johnson, "Wages, Employment Conditions, and Welfare of Sugar-Beet Laborers". Monthly Labor Review, February 1938, p. 325.

of limited national importance. In 1933, for example, the crop value of sugar beets was $59,000,000 as compared with that of wheat, which was $280,000,000; of cotton, which was $633,000,000 and of tobacco, which was $179,000,000.[1/] Nevertheless, sugar beets are a very important "minor" agricultural crop. While the crop as a whole plays a small part in the total agricultural economy of the United States, it is highly important to the farmers and farm workers in many sections of Colorado, Michigan, California and Utah. For this reason, the problems of regulation of the production of the crop and of the labor conditions attendant thereto assume a magnitude out of proportion to their national importance.

In Morgan and Weld Counties in Colorado, for example, sugar beets represented over 50 per cent of the total value of all crops in 1931. In other counties of the State, such as Adams, Boulder, Larimer, Logan, and Otero, sugar beets equaled over one-third of the total crop value in that year.[2/] In such areas, sugar beets not only are the largest crop raised, but also fit into the whole agricultural economic pattern. The tops of the beets are used as feed for cattle, having a value per acre for this purpose equal to alfalfa produced on a quarter of an acre.[3/] The pulp left after the extraction of sugar is also a valuable cattle feed which is sold back to the farmers by the sugar companies

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1/ U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of Agriculture, 1935, p. 671.

2/ W. Lewis Abbott, Report for the Committee on Labor Conditions in the Growing of Sugar Beets, March, 1934, p. 48.

3/ Ibid., p. 14.

at a price usually lower than could be secured in a competitive market.[1]

The study of the costs of production and of receipts from various crops in Colorado between 1922 and 1928 showed beets to be one of the most profitable crops. During this period the net profit per acre on sugar beets averaged $25.50, compared with a profit per acre of $13.63 on potatoes, the next most profitable crop.[2] Even in 1933 when the price of sugar beets fell to record low levels, it did not decline to levels as unremunerative as those recorded for most of the other crops. Compared with the average price of $5.58 per ton of sugar beets in the period 1909-1914, the price in 1933 was $5.32, or slightly over 95 per cent of the price of the base period. This compared very favorably with the prices of grains which were 62 per cent of the base period; of fruits and vegetables, 80 per cent; cotton, 64 per cent; meat animals, 59 per cent; dairy products, 69 per cent; and poultry products, 74 per cent.[3]

The result of this situation was that despite the low price of sugar and the existence of a world crisis in the industry during the years 1910-1933, the acreage devoted to the raising of sugar beets and the amount of beet sugar produced in the United States expanded very markedly. During this period the sugar beet acreage harvested.

1/ Ibid.

2/ Ibid.

3/ U. S. Department of Agriculture, The Agricultural Situation, Vol. 18, No. 2, February 1, 1934, p. 20; cited in W. Lewis Abbott, op. cit., p. 15.

increased from 398,000 to 983,000, and production rose from about four million to 11 million tons. Beet sugar produced grew from about 510,000 tons to 1,642,000 tons between these end years.1/ Even during the depression years 1929 to 1933 when the total United States consumption of sugar declined by nine per cent, sugar beet acreage increased 43 per cent and output rose 51 per cent. 2/

The increase in the acreage devoted to sugar beets and the rise in the production of sugar from beets in the United States has been made possible chiefly through the operation of the protective tariff on sugar. 3/ The industry has been fostered not only by Congress through tariff, but also by the Department of Agriculture through educational assistance and research which has resulted in increased output. In addition, the Government has financially assisted the development of the beet sugar industry through irrigation projects which have made possible the opening of millions of acres of land in the dry plains of the Rocky Mountain plateaus.4/ Today about three-fourths of the sugar beet acreage is in irrigated areas.5/

Whatever form Government assistance has taken in the past, the

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1/ Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Department of Agriculture.

2/ L. K. Macy et al, Sugar Beets, W.P.A., National Research Project, Report No. A-1, August 1937, p. 2.

3/ Between 1892 and 1894 the sugar beet industry received a direct subsidy. During the following 40 years it had been protected by a tariff. At the time of the invalidation of the AAA, the industry was protected by a tariff plus the price-raising features of the quota system.

4/ J. E. Dalton, Sugar, A Case Study of Government Control, p. 147.

5/ Elizabeth S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 324.

principal objectives have always been the same: to guard the interests of the sugar beet farmers in the western United States and to support the beet sugar industry which contributes about 25 per cent of our national sugar requirements.1/

2. The beet workers.

(a) Number and type of persons employed.

In 1933 the United States Tariff Commission estimated that about 160,000 agricultural workers were employed in the beet fields of the United States. Of this total, almost 70 per cent were contract laborers employed under an agreement with the grower which fixed the terms of payment and the time and manner of doing the hand-work on a specified number of acres. Only about 30 per cent of the labor supply, therefore, represented that of farmers and their families performing their own work or consisted of day laborers. These laborers were distributed as follows: California, about 13,700; in the Rocky Mountain States, 90,400; in the Great Lakes region, 55,000.2/ The remaining beet workers were distributed among the minor beet regions of the country.

Prior to 1920, adult male laborers without families constituted a considerable portion of the labor supply in the beet fields. After that year, the practice of hiring the labor of whole families arose, and the numbers of single and unattached workers declined.

1/ J. E. Dalton, op. cit., p. 145.

2/ Letter from J. L. Coulter to A. J. Weaver, November 16, and December 19, 1933; cited in W. T. Ham, "Regulation of Labour Conditions in Sugar Cultivation under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration," International Labour Review, January 1936, p. 76.

The preference for family labor has been due to the belief of the growers and sugar companies that the presence of women and children would discourage the men from seeking employment elsewhere before the season was over, and thus prevent a labor shortage at harvest time.1/

Before the World War a large part of the beet labor supply consisted of German-Russian families who had migrated in large numbers to the United States from the Volga district in Russia. Because of cessation of immigration during the War and of its restriction after it, sugar beet growers recruited Mexican and Spanish-American laborers. Today, sugar beet workers in the United States are largely Spanish-speaking people of either American or Mexican birth. The second largest racial group is the Russian-German.2/ Other American-born adults rarely seek employment in the beet fields, however much they may need it. The low social status of beet laborers and the very fatiguing work, much of which is done in a stooping posture, discourages them from this source of livelihood.3/

(b) System of employment.

The employment of labor for beet work is based upon a labor-contract system. Since the family is usually the unit of labor in this

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1/ W. T. Ham, "Regulation of Labour Conditions in Sugar Cultivation under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration," International Labour Review, January 1936, p. 77.

2/ This group comprised 22 per cent of all the heads of beet laborers' families included in a survey made by the U. S. Children's Bureau in 1935. See Elizabeth S. Johnson, "Wages, Employment Conditions, and Welfare of Sugar Beet Laborers," Monthly Labor Review, February 1938, p. 325.

3/ Ibid., p. 325.

type of work, the typical labor contract is one under which all the members of one family perform all the work. In many cases, however, the group working under a contract includes relatives and friends of the contractor's family, and sometimes includes strangers who share in the wages for the work.

The family-labor-contract system is advantageous to the industry largely because it provides greater assurance of an adequate supply of hand-labor during the growing and harvesting period. The sugar manufacturing companies, therefore, encourage the use of family labor and address their recruiting appeals accordingly. The practice of making contracts with the heads of families is characteristic of the sugar beet industry in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana, and in the beet growing States of the east. Sole or gang labor of unattached men is more usual in California and Idaho, while the employment of members of the grower's family is characteristic in the State of Utah.[1/]

Specific provisions in the contract for each district for any given year are usually embodied in a printed form drawn up either by the sugar company which operates in that district or by an association of the beet growers of the district. The provisions of the printed labor contract becomes the general pattern of labor relations in each district, even though the individual worker may be hired under an oral agreement in place of a signed contract.

1/ Ibid., p. 327.

The labor contract specifies the acreage on which the hand-work is to be performed, the manner in which the work shall be done, the rate of wages per acre for each operation which is to be paid, and the perquisites which are provided. It usually specifies also the time of payment in relation to the completion of each process of cultivation, the conditions under which store credit may be granted for the worker while waiting for the payment of his wages, and the portion of earnings for summer work to be withheld until the harvest is completed. The contract usually authorizes the grower to hire extra help to be paid for by the contracting worker and specifies the basis of settlement in case the contracted work is not carried through to completion.

The employment status of beet workers, for the most part, is governed by a triangular relationship between the laborer, the grower, and the sugar company. A labor contract is made between the beet grower and the worker after the grower has made a contract with the sugar company for the raising and selling of the crop. Although the labor contract itself is an agreement between the grower and the hired worker, its terms of employment are dependent in various direct and indirect ways upon the prior contract between the sugar company and the grower. The price which the company agrees to pay the grower for beets, for example, sets a limit upon the wage which the grower can afford to pay the contract laborer. Moreover, the company, rather than the grower, recruits beet workers to be hired by the growers. The sugar company pays not only the expenses for recruitment, but may even finance the cost of the worker's transportation to the fields, if that proves necessary. The company often refers resident beet workers to growers who themselves do not recruit labor. The processor decides for the grower when the laborer should start work

at each operation, and whether the grower may or should hire additional labor to speed up the work on the acreage allotted to the beet workers.

Disputes between the contract laborer and the grower are often settled by the sugar company which, either by agreement or by force of circumstances, acts as arbiter. In many localities the sugar company provides dwellings for beet workers who may occupy them either for the season or may live in them for the year-round.

(c) Type and conditions of work.

The production of sugar beets requires more labor to the acre than most field crops in the United States. Labor represents the largest part in its cost of production. Between 50 and 80 per cent of the work is performed by hand,[1] which involves three operations: (a) blocking and thinning in the spring; (b) hoeing and weeding during the summer; and (c) pulling and topping in the fall.[2]

1/ L. K. Macy, et al, Sugar Beets, Works Progress Administration, National Research Project, Report No. A-1, August 1937, p. xiv.

2/ Although extensive mechanization of sugar-beet production is not quite imminent, the development of machines for the principal operations which require hand labor - blocking, pulling and topping - is well advanced. Mechanical blocking, which precedes hand thinning in the spring, has already come into use in some areas. In the Iowa-Minnesota area, where in 1929 mechanical cross-blocking was first introduced, 40 per cent of the beets grown in 1932 were cross-blocked. In addition to reducing labor required in the blocking operation, mechanical cross-blocking permits cross-cultivation, thus eliminating hand hoeing. Potentially much more important to the hired laborers who derive part or all of their income from work in the sugar beet fields are developments in harvesting machinery used for pulling and topping operations. These operations today are the largest consumers of hand labor. Mechanical beet harvesters have been experimented with for more than 40 years and a small number of them are now in operation. Although these machines are reported to give results comparable in quality to hand work and are reputed to possess economic advantages over hand harvesting, they have not been commercially distributed as yet. Cf. Ibid., pp. 24 and 25.

Blocking or bunching consists of chopping out with a hoe the intermediate plants in a row, leaving one tuft every 10 or 12 inches. This tuft then consists of a number of plants. Thinning consists of picking out from this bunch all but one plant which is left to produce one large beet. Since these two processes must be finished before the plants grow too large and too crowded, they are performed under pressure for speed and frequently for excessively long hours per day. Hoeing and weeding consist of loosening the soil and keeping the soil free from weeds. The operations of pulling and topping involve the loosening and pulling up of the beets from the ground and chopping off the bunch of leaves at the top.

The production of sugar beets, as the production of other unmechanized crops, depends in large measure on migratory labor. A sufficient supply of contract labor is not available in local communities of most beet regions, and workers must be recruited from considerable distances. As is the case in all agricultural industries, beet growing requires more laborers during the harvest than are needed on the farm during the balance of the year. Unlike the production of other intensively cultivated crops, a large part of the labor used in harvesting sugar beets is also used during their growing period. For this reason, the sugar beet crop provides a longer working year than any other important agricultural consumer of migratory labor.

Although the beet growing season is long, it is not continuous. All of the hand labor must be concentrated in brief periods scattered over six or seven months of the year. There are two periods

of three to five weeks in which most of the hand-work is condensed. Bunching and thinning is done in the latter part of May and early in June and the harvesting is performed in October and early part of November. In California these operations are performed earlier in the year. Hoeing and weeding are done one or more times during the summer.

The earnings of agricultural beet laborers are governed by the rate they receive per acre and the number of acres that a family or an individual worker can handle in a season. The payment is a fixed amount per acre for each of the various operations. For topping operations, however, payment is usually based on a sliding scale of wage rates depending upon the yield per acre, with or without a guaranteed minimum per acre. Wage rates per acre vary from area to area. They are usually higher in northern Wyoming and southern Montana than in northern Colorado and western Nebraska. Similarly, they are usually higher in northern Colorado than in southern Colorado. Also, they tend to be lower in the unirrigated eastern beet region than in the western irrigated area where yields are higher. Differences in wage rates paid to beet workers in the different production areas are governed generally by the relative abundance of the supply of resident beet workers and by the average sugar production per acre of beets.[1/]

It is commonly said that in one season an experienced adult man can handle 10 acres; an inexperienced man, nine acres; a woman,

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1/ Elizabeth S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 333.

seven; and children smaller amounts according to age.[1] But the average number of acres actually handled by an individual worker depends upon the condition of each local labor market and the conditions of soil and climate in the beet growing region. Moreover, the amount of work obtained by each worker varies with the different processes because the total amount of the specific type of work obtained by each family changes. Thus, one survey revealed that in 1935 the average acreages for the thinning process ranged from 5.3 per worker in the Arkansas valley and Western Slope, Colorado, to 12.6 per worker in southern Michigan.[2] Acreages for the hoeing process averaged somewhat higher than acreages for thinning and for topping because fewer persons were engaged in the hoeing process.

The number of acres of beet work handled per family depends not only on the availability of work, but also on the number of workers per family. A study of the Children's Bureau showed that of the 746 families who reported the acreage of beets thinned in 1935, half of them handled less than 18 acres per family, and 56 per cent handled less than 20 acres. Only 25 per cent of these families handled 30 acres or more.[3]

Although beet working families are attached to the beet fields for about six months of the year, their actual working time in the

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1/ W. Lewis Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

2/ These averages were based on the number of family members working at least seven hours a day and as many days as any member of the family had work. See Elizabeth S. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

3/ Elizabeth S. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

field is of much shorter duration. The Children's Bureau survey showed that the fathers of 405 beet working families in Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, and Wyoming, worked an average (median) of 56 days in 1935. Twenty-five per cent of them reported working fewer than 40 days in that year. Total working days of 80 to 100 for the season were reported in a number of cases in Michigan and Minnesota, but such duration of work was found to occur very rarely for the beet growing regions of the Rocky Mountain States.1/

These contract workers do not ordinarily find supplementary work during the beet growing season, and in common with others who engage in seasonal work they find insufficient employment in the winter.2/ Beet field workers in the Rocky Mountain States, particularly, have difficulty in obtaining year-round employment. The concentration of sugar beet culture about a limited number of sugar factories, and the fact that a large part of the sugar beet industry has been developed in the sparsely settled Mountain States, accounts in part for this lack of opportunity for employment in other industries. On the other hand, the greater diversification of crops and the longer agricultural season in California together with the fact that the beet fields are comparatively near urban centers, make it probable

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1/ Elizabeth S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 331.

2/ Although the refining of sugar beets begins after harvesting is completed and continues for several weeks thereafter, it has been observed that almost no beet field workers are employed in the beet-processing factories. Only a few sugar refining companies have made efforts to find employment for contract laborers between the beet-growing seasons. (Cf. P. S. Taylor, "Mexican Labor in the United States, Valley of the South Platte," University of California Publication in Economics, Vol. 6, no. 2, 1929, pp. 123-124.

that employment of beet workers in that State is more nearly continuous than in other beet growing areas of the United States.

The working day in beet fields are extremely long. Available data suggest that from $9\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 hours a day was probably typical of the time spent in beet field work in the late 1920's.[1/] The Children's Bureau reported that in 1935 working hours in thinning were at least 12 a day and in topping, 11 a day for half of the fathers of beet working families. The working week was six, and sometimes seven, days.[2/] These long hours of work arise from a desire of the laborers to earn as much as possible in the short working season. They are long also because of the fear that the grower may decide to hire extra help to finish the work on the acreage for which the laborer has the contract, thereby reducing the laborer's net earnings.

1/ W. Lewis Abbott, op. cit., p. 8.

2/ Elizabeth S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 332.